Most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are low or low-middle income countries with very few health-care professionals trained in transfusion medicine, limited laboratory resources, inadequately developed quality systems, donor populations with a high prevalence of transfusion-transmissible agents and many patients in urgent need of blood transfusion. This combination of factors renders the provision of a safe and adequate blood supply in SSA extremely difficult. In this talk, I will discuss the challenges and controversies facing these countries with particular reference to my experience over the past decade in Uganda.